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SHOOING THAT FLY

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A radio talk by Mr. J. L. Webb, Bureau of Entomology, through Station WRC and 35 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, May 6, 1930.

Hello, Everybody! When my good friend here asked me to talk to you about flies he didn't tell me the title he was going to announce for the talk. Evidently he thinks I know os some magic way of shooing a fly that will actually get rid of the varmint. Now of course, you know as well as I just how much good it does to shoo a fly. If it's a bald head the fly is after, why he's right back there inside of two minutes and the shooing has to be done all over again. There is one admirable trait in a fly -- persistence. He sticks to his job. And if you think for a minute you're going to get the best of him you've got to show some of that same quality and organize yourself for intelligent action. Suppose now you really do get exasperated to the point of seizing the swatter and hunting down the fly that is pestering you -- why, another fly just takes his place after you have temporarily relieved your feelings by dealing death and destruction to the first one. And about that time you begin to wonder where they all come from anyhow. Well, if you live on a farm, go out and look in the manure pile. Now this is a point my mentor here has duly cautioned me about. He says manure isn't a nice thing to talk about, especially when you don't know who may hear you. Right there I think he's wrong, and I'll tell you why. Some of the soldier boys who came back from the War have told me marvelous tales of the manure piles in France. They say that the bigger the manure pile which a French farmer has in his front yard, the higher he stands in his community. So you see a manure pile must have some dignity and prestige about it which we have not been appreciating. All the same, that's where your flies come from, or most of them at any rate. They breed there by the millions, and the proper way to destroy this fly hatchery is to cart the manure away and scatter it thinly over the fields. This should be done at least once every week during the spring, summer, and early fall. It really should be done twice a week during hot weather. Of course, flies will also breed in neglected garbage and other decaying vegetable matter. In midsummer, when the weather is good and hot, a generation of flies matures about every ten days, and the numbers increase just about like a snowball rolling down hill; that is, if they find suitable breeding places. But now I imagine I hear you asking, "What is the innocent bystander to do; that is, the man who does not have a manure pile on his premises but who nevertheless has plenty of flies?" Well, first there is the matter of screens. All doors and windows should of course be properly screened, see that the screens are all good and tight with no holes in them, and screen doors should be hung so as to open outward. It is considerably more difficult for flies to rush in when a door is opened outwardly than when it is opened inwardly. In fact, every time a door is opened inwardly it is just a plain invitation to come in to whatever flies are gathered on the outside of that door. They're inside the minute you open the door. Then there is the matter of fly traps. Two or three of the right kind of fly traps properly baited and placed just outside the kitchen doors will catch a great many flies which would otherwise get in the house. The Department of Agriculture has given a good deal of attention to the type of trap which will catch the most flies. If you will write to the Department

asking for the bulletin on fly traps this publication will be sent to you. It will give you detailed information about the kind of trap to use and how to build it at home. If you have a 12-year old boy of a mechanical turn of mind, some screen wire, barrel hoops, a few pieces of lath, hammer and nails, you have all that is necessary to produce an effective fly trap. You will find that it is worth far more than it costs. If you don't have a 12-year old boy around your place, just turn the calendar back a few years and go to it yourself.

Now, a few flies will get past all the barriers you place in their way and get into the house, and if you happen to live close to where the flies are breeding, they may be numerous enough to be rather annoying. In cities where there are not very many stables or other breeding places it is comparatively easy to keep a properly screened house free from flies by simply using a fly swatter promptly as soon as a fly is seen anywhere in the house. But in the country the matter is not quite so simple. Here we may have to resort to other measures. A very effective fly poison may be made by adding three teaspoonfuls of commercial formalin to a pint of milk. Enough brown sugar to make it sweet should be added. Then put a piece of bread in a saucer or some other dish and pour enough of the mixture over it to thoroughly saturate the bread and leave some liquid in the dish. Set it in a window or somewhere not too close to exposed food, as the dead flies are likely to drop two or three feet away from the dish. Then, there is our old friend tanglefoot. This sticky fly paper is unsightly for use in a home, but for some commercial establishments it may be used to advantage. It should be suspended by a cord from the ceiling in order to be most effective and to keep it out of the way of people moving about in the room.

In some cases fly sprays may also be used to advantage. Most of the sprays on the market contain kerosene extract of pyrethrum as a base. If only a small amount of spray is needed, it is best to buy a can of one of the commercial brands. But if you expect to use a large amount, write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for directions for the home manufacture of kerosene extract of pyrethrum. Pyrethrum is spelled p-y-r-e-t-h-r-u-m. If you can't remember that just ask for the directions for making fly spray, and we will know what you mean.

There is one additional way of keeping flies out which I might mention. This is the use of an electric fan placed just outside and above the door. The current of air should be directed downward. It is especially applicable to commercial establishments where the door is open a good part of the time. Several people who have tried this have expressed themselves as being well pleased with the results.

I suppose I need hardly remind you that the house fly is a dangerous creature. There are several diseases which can be carried by flies. Probably the one most commonly spread in this way is typhoid fever. However, in order to spread typhoid the fly must first actually come in contact with the germs of that disease. If there is no typhoid in the community or for miles around, then it is not likely that the flies entering your home are typhoid carriers. But nevertheless, the knowledge that flies breed in filth and never take a bath, even at Christmas, should be sufficient to spur you on to do your best to keep them out of your homes.

You will want more information than I can give you in this little visit to your household if you are determined to do a complete job of suppressing these insect menaces about your household and your farm. So I suggest that you send your request today to the Department of Agriculture for three Farmers' Bulletins. Here they are:

Farmers' Bulletin 734, "Flytraps and Their Operation."

Farmers' Bulletin 1408, "The House Fly and how to suppress it.

Farmers' Bulletin 1097, "The Stable Fly; How to Prevent its Annoyances and its Losses to Live Stock.

Now, if you don't remember those numbers or those titles simply send your request for the three bulletins on fly control.

I hope they help you pass a more comfortable and a healthier summer. Thank you for your attention, and goodbye.

